

**City University of Hong Kong  
Course Syllabus**

**Offered by Department of Linguistics and Translation  
with effect from Semester A 2017/18**

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**Part I Course Overview**

**Course Title:** Functional Approaches to Syntax

**Course Code:** LT5431

**Course Duration:** One Semester

**Credit Units:** 3

**Level:** P5

**Medium of Instruction:** English

**Medium of Assessment:** English

**Prerequisites:**  
*(Course Code and Title)* Nil

**Precursors:**  
*(Course Code and Title)* Nil

**Equivalent Courses:**  
*(Course Code and Title)* Nil

**Exclusive Courses:**  
*(Course Code and Title)* Nil

## Part II Course Details

### 1. Abstract

This course is designed to give a general survey of current syntactic theories, with a special emphasis on functional approaches to syntax. It aims to explore the differences between ‘formal’ and ‘functional’ paradigms for syntactic analysis, with a thorough discussion of their 1) theoretical premises, 2) research concerns, 3) data collection 4) analytical methodology, and 5) explanatory principles. The class will gradually prepare students to master the functional theories from more assessable to more challenging approaches. The class will first lay a foundation by focusing on the form-function associations manifested in the English grammar and then progress to introduce a variety of functional explanatory mechanisms with illustrations from a wide range of languages. The ultimate goal of this class is to familiarize students with a wide spectrum of contemporary syntactic theories that take grammar as coding devices for coherent communication. “Syntax codes what people do the most.” – T. Givon.

### 2. Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

(CILOs state what the student is expected to be able to do at the end of the course according to a given standard of performance.)

No.	CILOs	Weighting (if applicable)	Discovery-enriched curriculum related learning outcomes (please tick where appropriate)		
			A1	A2	A3
1	Show enthusiastic and proactive participation in class discussion and weekly reading assignment	20%	✓	✓	
2	Demonstrate critical thinking, clear organization and oral skills in group presentation	20%		✓	✓
3.	Demonstrate a clear grasp of the theoretical constructs in participating in a debate on formal vs. functional approaches: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Functional vs. formal premises</li> <li>➤ Form-function mapping principles</li> <li>➤ Discourse motivations</li> <li>➤ Cognitive motivations</li> </ul>	20%	✓	✓	✓
4.	Demonstrate a clear understanding of the form-meaning mapping relations in writing up a Wikipedia article on one of the following issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Nouns and Verbs</li> <li>➤ Topic vs. Subject</li> <li>➤ Information status</li> <li>➤ Preference and definiteness</li> <li>➤ Passive construction</li> <li>➤ Transitivity</li> </ul>	20%	✓	✓	✓

5.	Demonstrate the ability of understanding and applying one of the approaches discussed in class to the analysis of a set of chosen data (final project): ➤ Givònian Semantics ➤ Discourse and grammar ➤ Cognitive semantics ➤ Construction grammar ➤ Corpus-based approach ➤ Emergent Grammar ➤ Grammaticalization/constructionalization	20%	✓	✓	✓
		100%			

**A1: Attitude**

*Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.*

**A2: Ability**

*Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to self-life problems.*

**A3: Accomplishments**

*Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.*

**3. Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs)**

*(TLAs designed to facilitate students' achievement of the CILOs.)*

TLA	Brief Description	CILO No.					Hours/week (if applicable)
		1	2	3	4	5	
Weekly adventure	Assigned reading materials for group discussion	✓					2-3 hours/wk
Group production	In-class oral presentation made by individual groups		✓				1-2 hours/sem
Debate	Students will be divided into groups for debating about the different approaches to the same issue (the passive voice)			✓			2-4 hours/sem
Mid-term innovation review	Open-book and open-notes review and writing up of interested issues as Wikipedia entries				✓		3-5 hours/sem
Discovery project	Students will apply what is learned in class to a hands-on project on analysing a set of data they collected					✓	10-20 hours/sem

**4. Assessment Tasks/Activities (ATs)**

*(ATs are designed to assess how well the students achieve the CILOs.)*

Assessment Tasks/Activities	CILO No.						Weighting	Remarks
	1	2	3	4	5			
Continuous Assessment: 100%								
Weekly adventure (20%)	✓						20%	
Group creative production and presentation (20%)		✓					20%	
Debate: let the theory speak! (20%)			✓				20%	
Mid-term innovative review (20%)				✓			20%	
Final discovery project (20%)					✓		20%	
Examination: ____% (duration: _____, if applicable)							100%	

## 5. Assessment Rubrics

*(Grading of student achievements is based on student performance in assessment tasks/activities with the following rubrics.)*

Assessment Task	Criterion	Excellent (A+, A, A-)	Good (B+, B, B-)	Fair (C+, C, C-)	Marginal (D)	Failure (F)
Weekly readings (20%)	Clear and critical understanding of the reading	Excellent ability in demonstrating the said criteria	Good ability in demonstrating the said criteria	Satisfactory ability in demonstrating the said criteria	Barely adequate evidence in demonstrating the said criteria	Little or no evidence of the said ability
Group production and presentation (20%)	Clear, interesting, and well-organized oral presentation	Excellent ability in demonstrating the said criteria	Good ability in demonstrating the said criteria	Satisfactory ability in demonstrating the said criteria	Barely adequate evidence in demonstrating the said criteria	Little or no evidence in demonstrating the said criteria
Debate (20%)	Clear, interesting and well-delivered arguments for the chosen approach	Excellent ability in demonstrative the said criteria	Good ability in demonstrating the said criteria	Satisfactory ability in demonstrating the said criteria	Barely adequate evidence in demonstrating the said criteria	Little or no evidence in demonstrating the said criteria
Mid-term review (20%)	Clear, accurate and well-presented written text of the assigned topics	Excellent ability in demonstrating the said criteria	Good ability in demonstrating the said criteria	Satisfactory ability in demonstrating the said criteria	Barely adequate evidence in demonstrating the said criteria	Little or no evidence in demonstrating the said criteria
Discovery Project (20%)	Clear, interesting and well-argued analysis of a set of chosen data with an abstract for conference preaseantion	Excellent ability in demonstrating the said criteria	Good ability in demonstrating the said criteria	Satisfactory ability in demonstrating the said criteria	Barely adequate evidence in demonstrating the said criteria	Little or no evidence in demonstrating the said criteria

### Part III Other Information (more details can be provided separately in the teaching plan)

#### 1. Keyword Syllabus

Topics to be covered in class discussion include:

- Formal vs. Functional approaches to syntax
- Theoretical framework: Grammar as form-function association
- Definitions of ‘function’
- Explanatory Principles
- Discourse basis for syntactic categories
- Discourse and cognition
- Argument structure and information status
- Language universal
- Ergative case marking
- Transitivity
- Construction grammar
- Emergent Grammar
- Corpus-based approach
- Grammaticalization and lexicalization

#### 2. Reading List

##### 2.1 Compulsory Readings

*(Compulsory readings can include books, book chapters, or journal/magazine articles. There are also collections of e-books, e-journals available from the CityU Library.)*

10 core readings for MA students (A packet of required readings will be available for use):

1. Givon, T. 1993. *English Grammar: a function-based introduction*. Chapter 1 and Chapter 7. Amsterdam: Benjamins Publishing Co
2. Li, Charles and Sandra Thompson. 1976. Subject and topic: a new typology of language, in *Subject and Topic*, ed. by Charles Li. Academic Press.
3. Hopper, Paul and Sandra Thompson. 1984. The discourse basis for lexical categories in universal grammar. *Language* (60): 703-753.
4. Chafe, Wallace. 1987. Cognitive constraints on information flow, in *Coherence and Grounding in Discourse*, ed. By Russell Tomlin.
5. Goldberg, Adele. 1995. *Constructions. A Construction Grammar Approach to Argument Structure*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
6. Thompson, Sandra, and Paul Hopper. 1997. *Emergent grammar and argument structure: evidence from conversation*. Paper presented at the Symposium on Discourse and grammar.
7. Traugott, Elizabeth and Bernd Heine. Introduction. In *Approaches to Grammaticalization*, vol. 2, eds. by E. Traugott and B. Heine, 1-14. Amsterdam: Benjamins Publishing Co.
8. Thompson, Sandra, and Anthony Mulac. 1991. A quantitative perspective on grammaticalization of epistemic parentheticals in English. In *Approaches to Grammaticalization*, vol. 2, eds. by E. Traugott and B. Heine, 313-329. Amsterdam: Benjamins Publishing Co.
9. Heine, Bernd, Ulrike Claudi and F. Hunnemeyer. 1991. From cognition to grammar – evidence from African Languages. In *Approaches to grammaticalization*, eds by E. Traugott and B. Heine, 150-187. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
10. Liu, Meichun. 1997. From motion verb to linking element: discourse explanations for the grammaticalization of JIU in Mandarin Chinese. *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* (25): 259-289.

Four more challenging readings for doctoral students:

11. Givón, T. 1984. *Syntax* Vol. I. Background. Amsterdam: Benjamins Publishing Co.
12. Hopper, Paul and Sandra Thompson. 1980. Transitivity in grammar and discourse. *Language* (56): 251-299.
13. Du Bois, John. 1987. The discourse basis for ergativity. *Language* (63): 805-855.
14. Bybee, Joan. 2006. From usage to grammar: the mind's response to repetition. *Language* 82(4). 711-733.

## 2.2 Additional Readings

(Additional references for students to learn to expand their knowledge about the subject.)

1.	Givón, T. (1984). <i>Syntax</i> , Vol. I & II. Amsterdam/Chicago: Amsterdam: J. Benjamins Publishing Co Co.
2.	Givón, T. (1993). <i>English Grammar: a function-based introduction</i> . Vol. I and II. Amsterdam/Chicago: Benjamins Publishing Co
3	Traugott, E, and B. Heine. 1991. <i>Approaches to Grammaticalization</i> . Amsterdam/Chicago: John Benjamins Publication Co..
4	Big, Yung-O, James Tai, Sandra Thompson. 1996. Recent developments in functional approaches to Chinese. In <i>New Horizons in Chinese Linguistics</i> , Ch. 3., eds. by C-T. James Huang, Y-H Audrey Li. Kluwer Academic Publishing.
5	Haegeman, L. 1991. Liliane. <i>Introduction to Government and Binding Theory</i> . 1991. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.